

**Format for Input  
Review of Mission Support Implementation Plan (MSIP),  
Including Integrated Product Team (IPT) White Papers**

**Reviewing Organization:** Office of Human Capital/MSFC

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- 1. Does the MSIP adequately explain the role of “mission support” in achieving the Agency’s mission? If not, please identify the gaps and describe what steps may be taken to mitigate the concern.**

Overall, yes.

The MSIP document does an excellent job of bringing ‘mission support’ into the mainstream. Introducing the idea of *risk* into institutional operations conveys a sense of connection between the institutional ‘side of the house’ and the programs/projects that has clearly been historically lacking. A common set of measures for MSO’s (to the extent feasible) is a monumental feat without question; however, the yield for NASA’s mission accomplishment would far outweigh upfront resource expenditures required for accomplishment. One pitfall to avoid in the sustainment of such an effort – reporting requirements should not be overly burdensome and thus become the focus.

Section 1.2: The importance of mission support could be enhanced by drawing on NASA’s extensive Lessons Learned Database. An example of how institutional risk led to failure of a past mission could be referenced or included in an appendix. (1.2 page 1). Lessons learned are a powerful story and anchor for how people change their mindset relative to how institutional risk can lead to mission failure. If lessons learned are added, examples of how the new proposed risk management tools, etc. would have/could have been used to mitigate or reduce risk in those situations could lend a higher level of clarity and credibility to proposed changes.

Section 1.2.1: The identification of only two MSO’s in the current footnote appears incomplete. The Integrated Enterprise Management (IEM), Office of Education, Chief Information Office, and Human Capital Management organizations all have program/project as well as institutional responsibilities (other MSO’s may as well). Question the use of a footnote to make this key point in interpreting the language of the Plan - it is easily overlooked. Suggestion to state in section 1.2.1: “Several (or a number of) mission support organizations have programmatic as well as institutional responsibilities. The scope of this plan covers only institutional activities.”

Section 3.2 states that “no Mission Support Office tracks long-term outcomes”. Office of Education does annually develop and/or update a set of programmatic performance measures and multi-year objectives aligned to the Agency Strategic Goals, and reports to NASA’s Annual Performance Plan and Performance Accountability Report (PAR). If Office of Education programmatic performance measures are not acknowledged in this section because the intent of the MSIP is to address only institutional activities, recognition of the Office of Education’s programmatic responsibilities will resolve the inconsistency noted above in reference to MSIP section 1.2.1.

- 2. From your organization’s perspective, are all relevant aspects of mission support addressed within the MSIP? If not, please identify the aspect(s) your organization feels that the Agency should consider.**

Overall, yes. Comments follow.

Although this is called an *Implementation Plan*, it is unclear what approval processes or governing bodies are involved. It is also unclear how these initiatives will be monitored. There is a concern that there would need to be significant resources required to report to the Agency.

It will be important that the rewrite of the Agency’s risk management policy (as noted in section 5.2.3) is the version referenced in the multiple NPR 7120 NASA Program and Project Management Processes and Requirements documents that are currently in development and/or review.

- 3. From your organization’s perspective, are the Mission Support Goals identified within the MSIP the correct goals? Stated another way – will the attainment of these goals enable the Agency, as an institution, operate in a more efficient and effective manner?**

Yes, attainment of these goals as defined will change the institutional operations of the Agency in an unprecedented manner. Concerns/comments follow.

Section 2.2: The “Note” following section 2.2 seems to place attainment at risk right “out of the gate”. The statement seems to imply that NASA isn’t really serious about this, or worst. A different way to state this might be, “the timing and level of commitment by NASA to the implementation and/or funding for these 24 High-Impact Objectives are, in some cases, still to be determined.

- 4. From your organization’s perspective, what other Mission Support Goals should the Agency pursue in order to operate in a more effective and efficient manner?**

The Plan does an excellent job of covering the goals in an overarching manner.

Mission Success will not happen through better processes and policies alone. It would be refreshing to see this addressed in a real, honest way in at least one of the goals. The goals could be strengthened, therefore, with a reference to what once was a tremendous strength for the Agency: the esprit de corps, the deep commitment of the NASA culture. We have two shuttle tragedies in our legacy, several failed high profile projects, and the root causes for their failures would not have been addressed by these 7 “goals”.

**5. From your organization’s perspective, are the sub-goals, objectives, and activities identified in the White Papers the correct measures to ensure that the Agency realizes its Mission Support Goals? Please describe what other sub-goals, objectives, and activities the Agency should consider. (Note: please identify which White Paper(s) you are responding to).**

General (applicable to all whitepapers): None of us are experienced enough or omniscient enough to know if these are a complete set of goals or not. We are responding from our own experiences and set of responsibilities. It appears that many hours have gone into the preparation of this document, and then at some point, sub-goals were ranked by a group of leaders and/or veterans. We can respect this investment and trust this leadership product – as it is an excellent product. If we can build in the flexibility addressed in MSG-3, the sub-goals do not have to be perfect/absolute complete at this time, but will be able to evolve as needs/challenges evolve.

How do the Headquarters level MSO comments on this Plan get integrated and calibrated with the comments from the individual field center supporting MSO’s?

Workforce: WF-1B: Why is the assumption that the longer term futuristic “what if” scenario workforce planning would only be conducted at the Agency level? It seems that the Centers would be involved and benefit from this type of analysis also. Scenario planning and modeling capabilities have been identified as requirements for the Center and Agency as part of the Human Capital Information Environment (HCIE) project.

As noted in the Workforce White Paper in Section 3, the performance measures to support workforce are not all-encompassing and work continues in this area. It will be critical to integrate updates and changes into this implementation plan as that work solidifies.

WF-2: Outcome Measures/Mission Capability Index Components/Competency match: While competency match is an indicator of alignment, this does not take into account the proficiency of the employee with the competency. It is recommended that proficiency level for a competency be included in this measure.

WF-2A: Recommend revising as follows: “The Office of Human Capital Management and the Agency HR community will lead efforts to ensure the Agency has the appropriate programs, processes, and tools to acquire and reshape the civil service workforce, and will coordinate with organizations such as the Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity, Office of Education, the Office of General Counsel, and strategic planning and communications groups distributed across Centers in various organizations, to ensure that such programs, processes, and tools address outreach, recruitment and retention needs, diversity considerations and legal requirements.”

WF-2A: Recommend the risk for this objective be rated *High* instead of *Medium*. In order to attract a workforce capable of achieving our lofty mission, NASA must realize the importance of becoming more flexible with offering hiring/retention incentives, advanced salaries, etc. in order to attract the “best and brightest” pool of candidates in a highly competitive market.

WF-2C: Maintaining a robust Cooperative Education Program should be included under this objective as another pipeline strategy.

No mention of the Office of Education Strategic Framework is referenced in detail as it pertains to the four areas of involvement. Inspire, Engage, Educate and Employ. Recommend under Objective WF-2C to include a statement that identifies and emphasizes the framework and includes the following: Student opportunities at NASA include internships, scholarship programs, and student education employment programs (e.g., cooperative education). The goal is to direct a subset of individuals through the “pipeline” to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering, or mathematics while drawing in new participants along the way and building the workforce.

Identifying those Educational programs that feed into the future workforce of NASA will be beneficial to the overall strategic workforce development plan.

WF-3C: While it may be assumed that the Employee Assistance Program falls under the stated role of the Office of the Chief Health and Medical Officer (i.e., “occupational and preventive health care system”), it is recommended that this program be specifically identified to ensure that the emotional health of the workforce is clearly addressed. Individual performance (certainly impacted by emotional health) as linked to corresponding organizational performance are valid measures to take into account.

6.0, II. - More tightly integrating workforce planning along with travel and procurement is needed if we are to be effective and successful in understanding requirements in total budget planning under full-cost.

6.1, I. - Paragraph 1 unclear. Under Paragraph 2, end of last sentence,

recommend adding “to provide a more complete understanding of total workforce resources”.

Issue WF-13, Remediation Approach: Add requirement to NPR 7120 NASA Program and Project Management Processes and Requirements documents (that are currently in development and/or review) for mission program/projects to identify and plan workforce requirements in coordination with their MSO.

It would be refreshing to see this objective define “environment” as something other than systems, structures, tools, and processes. These elements will not drive the “productivity” called for. If we revisit the CAIB report, we will see that we need an environment that respects the individual’s willingness to engage and contribute. Again, better systems, structures, tools and processes would not have saved either of the crews that we’ve lost, e.g. the 4 that are ranked as highest do not address the workforce issues that have resulted in two lost crews.

WF-4: Outcome Measure: % of systems that provide timely, useful information (ad hoc survey). Question the value of this measure – too subjective/too general.

**6. Do you agree with the characterization of the risks identified within the White Papers? If not, why not? (Note: please identify which White Paper(s) you are responding to)**

Yes, overall. Comments follow.

Relative to workforce planning:

- a. 60% of High priority objectives are rated 16 or higher on the matrix. The Agency should ensure that the bases for prediction are accurate and appropriate so that resources are applied to addressing the correct “fixes”.
- b. Outcome measures appear to be based on current human capital information systems. It is not clear that these systems are optimum for today’s usage or as the foundation for the future.

There is a cultural risk that is not addressed. This is the separation, in reviews, in status forums, etc., that has historically occurred (as a very acceptable and normal practice) regarding the institution and the programs/projects. Equitable weight should be given to acquiring/developing the right talent to execute the MSO missions. There exists two different ‘worlds’ on many levels. This Plan will not succeed if that culture is not changed.

**7. From your organization’s perspective, are the major barriers or risks to achieving the IPT sub-goals, objectives and activities captured in the White Papers? If not, please identify additional issues and risks that you feel should be included. (Note: please identify which White Paper(s) you are responding to)**

Yes, overall. Comments follow.

## REFERENCE WORKFORCE WHITEPAPER

Failure to align leadership and cultural behaviors as well as failure to provide training and development for these new behaviors will constitute a risk to attainment of the goals. Training is often viewed as an ‘employee perk and/or benefit’ – and on the bottom of the list for many supervisors/managers who struggle daily with workload issues. There often is not an adequate investment of time in analyzing and utilizing training as a performance impacter for organizations, and as a resource and tool that should be utilized on equal footing with any other Agency resource provided to MSO’s. Critical needs should drive budgets here.

MSG-4, addresses managing external requirements and expectations to optimize agency missions. Failure to effectively do this provides a risk to workforce planning success as human capital is highly regulated and large numbers of outside requirements are placed on the human capital workforce by OPM/OMB. Without appropriate management of these outside requirements, there is a significant risk to having the level of human capital workforce needed. Keeping a pulse (a ‘dashboard’ in real time) would be beneficial while looking at risk. Additional measures to consider relative to risk could include Employee Assistance Program (EAP) counselor visits, medical visits, medical insurance usage, credit problems, etc. Many companies in industry use these metrics as a leading indicator of levels of stress and thus possible negative impact on decision making.

Sound leadership is critical to a successful outcome for this Plan; therefore, inadequate investments in training to develop well-rounded and accountable leaders and supervisors will pose a serious risk to moving forward. Inadequate communications training is also a significant risk within this development framework.

It should be noted that an ‘investment strategy approach’ should be embedded into plans centered on training and development efforts. Every effort should be made by field centers to proactively plan and report on how the use of training resources has helped to improve critical competency gaps – in both ‘ramp up’ and ‘ramp down’ areas of concentration.

Information Systems – Issue IS-I4, Public Facing Web Sites: Migration to the NASA portal infrastructure will address the technical issues identified. There are costs associated with migration of public facing Web sites that site owners may be hard pressed to pay, especially if the Web site is maintained on a shoestring. Failure to plan and budget for site migrations poses a risk.

Issue IS-I12, Sensitive but Unclassified/Personally Identifiable Information: In addition to providing tools and training in protecting data, the Agency needs to address the increased workload of the process owners who may likely receive increased submissions of documentation and questions from program and project.

The example lists the ODIN service model as an Agency vehicle for providing services. There are always trade-offs with “total” solutions. If the goal of the solution is to satisfy all needs, the solution has to be flexible enough in cost and offerings to accommodate every situation. The risk is that the plan may become too complex and resource intensive to monitor effectively. The total service model must be able to support the smaller requirements. ODIN does not support desktops that have minimal refresh or network requirements. Like this example, a robust solution would have to be able to support the smaller quick turn around needs. This has been difficult for an Agency “Total” solution to meet. If the decision is for a partial or 80% solution, there must be clear definitions and processes for what may not be included. Excluded services will also involve considerable monitoring.

**8. Do you have other comments or considerations regarding the content of the MSIP or the White Papers?**

Execution of a strategy based on leadership vision often finds itself hindered by issues of workforce and cultural readiness. Strategic Organization Development (OD) should play a significant role in the implementation of this change to assist in uncovering the obstacles to achievement of this plan. The design of many innovative management approaches — high-performance teams, diversity awareness, clear communications, change management initiatives, peer coaching, and more — can be traced back to their fundamental roots: culture of an organization.

Encouraging to see a focus on the issue of the level of resources being drawn for reporting to external sources. Since the receivers of these actions are in no position to push back, heavy support is needed at an Agency level to help drive this change.

Remain ever mindful: The process for tracking/reporting progress on achieving the stated objectives in the MSIP should not evolve into the very situation discussed above. In other words, we should not let the reporting process become so extensive and burdensome that it compromises our capability to deliver products and achieve the stated objectives.

Consideration as to how this will be communicated to the Centers will be important to its success. It is also important that the criteria and directives be fully developed before the Centers are asked to gather information.

This MSIP has a tone that is very different from past “implementation plans.” It is more understandable and logical, with a direct leadership tone that will generate a sense of engagement for the many missions that we must support.

(Page 2, para 4: “NASA will issue new Agency policies and procedures to *institutionalize* MSIP planning.”) Propose that this sentence be changed to something like “NASA will revise Agency policies....”

The MSIP could be strengthened by referencing the principles and strengths of “Management by Objectives” (MBO) Approach, since that seems to be the major theme and motivation of the MSIP. Many organizations across the agency have begun implementation of MBO. The efficiency, alignment, and engagement that it generates would assist with the change management that will be required to implement the MSIP.

Mission support is critical to NASA success as driven by current powers that be. institutional impact has many controllable factors. Therefore, division of the task into functional areas for review and modification is a great first step.

Enterprise integration is defined as vertical and horizontal alignment of plans, business processes, and information systems across organizations and functional boundaries to provide competitive advantage.

([www.army.mil/aeioo/aetg/glossary.htm](http://www.army.mil/aeioo/aetg/glossary.htm)) This definition must be kept top of mind as the tactical initiatives roll.

NASA Center future state is depicted as “sized and staffed to meet its unique needs and to ensure that skills and abilities of every employee are used fully.”

This statement implies that a huge culture shift will occur in a relatively short time span. Does this methodology acknowledge that “A change in landscape necessitates a new way of thought, hence the learning organization.”

([http://www.td.rutgers.edu/papers/Culture\\_and\\_Innovation.pdf](http://www.td.rutgers.edu/papers/Culture_and_Innovation.pdf))

Encouraging to see mention throughout of the contractor workforce issues that impact our capabilities and skills in ways that we cannot adequately even understand or convey. Serious investment to fully understand these issues should be made - the right answers to the right questions around our contractor workforce would serve as a significant driver in many areas.

Minor – there are typos throughout this document (missing words, sentence structure errors, etc.).